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THE POET BRINGS PEGASUS TO THE FAIR.



THE FARMER BUYS PEGASUS.



PEGASUS IS YOKED IN A CART.



PEGASUS OVERTURNS THE CART.

RETSCH'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCHILLER.—PEGASUS IN HARNESS.

MAURICE RETSCH is at the present day, if not the first, at least the most popular and most admired of the German artists. In choosing his vocation, he has followed rather the bent of his own quiet tastes, and the instincts implanted in him by nature, than the allurements of fame or ambition. His life has been essentially a quiet and retired one. Living in a pretty rural cottage, in a picturesque and romantic situation near Dresden, he seems to revel in the glorious scenery which surrounds his native town, to seek pleasure only in his home, and to practise his art merely because he himself loves it. He dwells upon a small patrimony, which has been the property of his family for generations back; and having married a simple but earnest and high-minded girl, the daughter of one of his father's neighbours, he seems never since to have known sorrow or disappointment. He has no children; but this has never cast a cloud over the mutual confidence and affection which have ever existed between himself and his wife; and with a charming exhibition of tasteful and delicate sensibility, on every anniversary of their wedding-day he presents her with one of his own drawings. These have been all preserved in an album; and we are told by Mrs. Hall that no lover of artistic beauty, and depth of feeling and imagination, can enjoy a greater treat than an examination of its contents.

Retsch is not a painter in the ordinary sense of the word. He is more remarkable for the great breadth and truth of his conceptions than for the elaborateness of his embodiment of them. He does not depict upon canvas with laborious minuteness all the glories of scenery, or striking traits of physiognomy. He is a designer in the highest acceptance of the word. He seldom copies anything but ideas; they may be his own, or they may be those of others, but still ideas which never before have assumed tangible, visible, proportions. All his drawings or sketches are consequently distinguished by their force and originality. Upon examining them we cannot say that they are like anything we have seen before; we cannot recognise in them any striking resemblance to any great and well-known original, but we are, nevertheless, astonished by their *truth* and power. Retsch is intensely German. He has all the earnestness and depth of thought, and kindly domesticity of feeling, which characterise his countrymen; the great love of home and home enjoyments, the tender susceptibility to the influence of early associations, which prompts them to sing so loudly and so melodiously of "Fatherland," without any of the phlegmatic dreaminess and misty profundity which renders them unable to defend it against home tyranny or foreign inroads. No wonder, then, that he has entered fully and deeply into the wild but fascinating strains of Schiller and Goethe, and has marvellously realised the fantastic conceptions of their wonder-working genius. The result has been that some of his finest and most striking sketches are illustrations of their works. It would seem almost as if it had been assigned to Retsch do do with the pencil what Schiller does with the pen, so faithfully is the same idea rendered by two modes so widely dissimilar.

Schiller was not generally thought to possess any humorous talent. Most of his greatest and best known pieces are full of the wild and almost unearthly romance of passion which characterises many of Byron's works. Like the Greek tragedians, he mostly portrays griefs and heights of sorrow, sternness or ferocity, too deep and too far removed from the ordinary course of human events to evoke much of our sympathy. Like the rehearsal of the "woes of Electra," and the "sorrows of Hecuba," he often excites our admiration, but does not often call forth expressions of feeling. But to assert that Schiller was humorous, would, in the eyes of many, be an insult to the poet's genius. And yet many of his lighter pieces prove it. Six of what are called the *Suppressed Poems* are full of humour, but most of these were composed in youth, and we do not find that in his mature age he ever indulged in this vein, except in the *Pegasus in Harness*.

Into the spirit of this last Retsch fully entered, and we present our readers with engravings of the drawings which he

made to illustrate it. Most people are, doubtless, already in possession of the old mythological story about the winged horse Pegasus, said to have sprung from the blood of the dragon Medusa, when slain by Perseus; how he fixed his residence on Mount Helicon, where, by striking his foot on the ground, he raised the fountain Hippocrene; how he became the favorite of the Muses, and being tamed by Neptune or Minerva, was given to Bellerophon to conquer the Chimæra; and how when this monster was destroyed, Bellerophon wanting to fly to heaven, Jupiter, to punish his presumption, sent a gadfly to torment his charger, which immediately became restive and threw him, and continuing his flight to the upper regions, was finally placed amongst the constellations.

This fantastic story had furnished materials to many of the old classic poets. Hesiod, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and even Apollodorus and Lycophron the *Tenebrosus*, had all rung changes upon it, but all treated it with due solemnity, and looked at it in the sublime light. Schiller determined to handle it in the ridiculous vein, and succeeded admirably, making a German farmer purchase Pegasus at a fair, and presenting an amusing picture by showing how badly the lofty aspirations and stately capers of the celestial animal consorted with the humble duties in which his owner wished to employ him. Every one who possesses an acquaintance with any language besides his own, knows how difficult it is to preserve in a translation the delicate turns of expression, and peculiar associations from which every comic piece derives so much of its humour and raciness. An attempt has been made by E. A. Bowring to render this piece of Schiller's into English, and although it has proved by no means a happy one, still we know of no other that has succeeded so well, and we therefore present it to our readers for want of a better.

"Once to a horse fair,—it may perhaps have been
Where other things are bought and sold—I mean
At the Haymarket—there the Muses' horse
A hungry poet brought,—to sell of course.
The hippogriff neighed shrilly, loudly,
And reared upon his hind legs proudly;
In utter wonderment each stood and cried:
"The noble regal beast! But woe betide,
Two hideous wings his slender form disgrace."
"The breed," said they, "is doubtless rare,
But who would travel through the air?"
Not one of them would risk his gold.
At length a farmer grew more bold;
"As for his wings, I no use should find them,
But then how easy it is to clip or bind them!
The horse for drawing may be useful found,—
So friend I don't mind giving twenty pound!"
The other glad to sell his merchandize,
Cried "Done!"—and Hans rode off upon his prize.
The noble creature was ere long put to,
But scarcely felt the unaccustomed load,
Than, panting to soar upwards, off he flew,
And, filled with honest anger, overthrew
The cart, where an abyss just met the road.—
"Ho! ho!" thought Hans, "no cart to this mad beast
I'll trust. Experience makes one wise at least.

To drive the coach to-morrow, now, my course is,
And he as leader to the team shall go;
The lively fellow 'll save me full two horses,
As years pass on he'll doubtless tamer grow."

All went on well at first. The nimble steed
His partners roused—like lightning was their speed.
What happened next? Toward heaven was turned his eye,
Unus'd across the solid ground to fly,
He quitted soon the safe and beaten course,
And, true to nature's strong, resistless force,
Run over bog and moor, o'er hedge and pasture till'd;
An equal madness soon the other horses fill'd.
No reins could hold them in, no help was near—
Till—only picture the poor travellers' fear!—
The coach, well shaken and completely wreck'd,
Upon a hill's steep top at length was check'd.
"If this is always sure to be the case,"
Hans cried, and cut a sorry face,
"He'll never do to draw a coach or wagon.
Let's see if we can tame the fiery dragon
By means of heavy work and little food."
And so the plan was tried. But what ensued?

The handsome beast, before three days had passed,
Wasted to nothing. "Stay! I see at last!"
Cried Hans. "Be quick, you fellows! yoke him now,
With my most sturdy ox, before the plough!"
No sooner said than done. In union queer,
Together yoked were soon wing'd horse and steer.
The griffin pranced with rage, and his remaining might
Exerted to resume his old-accustomed flight.
'Twas all in vain; his partner stepped with circumspection,
And Phoebe's haughty steed must follow his direction—

Until at last, by long resistance spent,
When strength his limbs no longer was controlling,
The noble creature, with affliction bent,
Fell to the ground, and in the dust lay lolling.

"Accursed beast!" at length, with fury mad,
Hans shouted, while he soundly plied the lash;
"Even for ploughing, then, thou art too bad.
That fellow was a rogue to sell such trash!"

Ere yet his heavy blows had ceased to fly,
A brisk and merry youth by chance came by.

A lute was tinkling in his hand,
And through his light and flowing hair
Was twin'd with grace a golden band.
"Whither, my friend, with that strange pair?"

From far he to the peasant cried,
"A bird and ox with one yoke tied!
Was such a team e'er heard of, pray?
Thy horse's worth I'd fain essay;
Just for one moment lend him me—
Observe, and thou shalt wonders see!"
The hippogriff was loosen'd from the plough—
Upon his back the smiling youth leap'd now.
No sooner did the creature understand
That he was guided by a master hand,
Then 'gainst his bit he champ'd, and upward soar'd,
While lightning from his flaming eyes outpoured,
No longer the same being, royally,
A spirit, aye a god, ascended he—
Spread, in a moment, to the stormy wind
His noble wings, and left the earth behind;
And, ere the eye could follow him,
Had vanished in the heavens dim.

The story of Pegasus is a striking parallel to Schiller's own career. He, too, was in truth the favourite of the muses; and he, too, spurned the ordinary pursuits of every day life, that he might fly unshackled through the regions of fancy. His favourite book at an early age was the prophecy of Ezekiel. Its grand and awful sublimity, its words of glowing eloquence, its thundering denunciations, and its pathetic sweetness; its trumpet tones and angel harpings, awakened deep and lasting echoes in the soul of the child. When at school, Schiller exhibited no premature or extraordinary success in classical attainments; in this respect he was by no means superior to the rest of his schoolfellows; it was not the fiery eloquence of Greece and Rome which kindled his soul into ardour; the power which did that was of an older and still more glorious origin, and came from the great heart of the old Hebrew prophet. Schiller's career was distinguished by a fondness for solitary contemplation. Amid the grandeur of nature he learned solemn lessons, for it was not nature in her quiet garb of peace and serenity, that the future poet loved to look upon; it was when the sky was overcast, and the broad glare of lightning illuminated the prospect, when the deep roll of thunder seemed to shake the earth, when the sea was no longer calm, but broke in mighty waves upon the sea-shore, dashing its white spray to the clouds—that the soul of Schiller was aroused.

It is, then, by no means wonderful that the *materia medica* should find but little favour in his eyes, and that he should love the worship of the muses in preference to the art of medicine. A hymn written in childhood inspired his parents with the idea that he was peculiarly adapted for the church; the Duke of Wirtemberg, his father's patron, wished to place him in a college which he had founded a short time previously, that he might there study the law. But young Schiller could never reconcile himself to the dry drudgery which it entailed, and soon exchanged it for medicine, not with the view of pursuing it as a profession, but as the less of two evils, one of which the wishes of his friends made necessary.

But his leisure hours were always devoted to more congenial

pursuits, and in the works of Shakspeare, Klopstock, Goethe, Herder, and Gerstenberg, he found the pleasureable excitement which his more strictly legitimate occupations denied him. After taking his degree he was attached as physician to a grenadier battalion, with a small salary, and soon after published "The Robbers," the most celebrated of his works. The story was gloomy, the incidents improbable, and much of the writing fantastic. But its faults were universally acknowledged to be caused by youthful enthusiasm and inexperience, which wanted but time to correct. The sensation it excited all over Germany was profound and lasting, and as all the petty princes of that country are bitter enemies of "sensations" of any sort, the piece met with anything but a favourable reception from the authorities. The hero being impassioned and romantic, and the captain of a band of robbers, it was alleged that a great number of young men of respectable families were beginning to stop travellers on the highway, and demand their purses in a spirit of poetic fervour and enthusiasm. The play was, therefore, denounced as immoral, and destructive of domestic happiness. Schiller upon one occasion, surprised and delighted at the noise his work was making, paid a secret visit to Mannheim, for the purpose of seeing it acted. His disguise did not save him from recognition, and on his return he was put under arrest for a week. But his high spirit could not brook the petty tyranny and annoyance of military discipline, so he took final leave of the service, and fled again to Mannheim, where he received a cordial reception from the director of the theatre, who supplied him with money for his immediate wants.

He now applied himself wholly to literature, and published works in rapid succession, the mere enumeration of which would fill a page of our space. The reputation which he gained by the "Robber," and two other plays which he shortly afterwards produced, was immense. These were "Fiesco," and "Cabal and Love." His translation of Macbeth is most remarkable—it needed Schiller to translate Shakspeare. But not only as a poet must we regard this great man, he has gained considerable fame as an historian. His first production in this capacity was the "History of the Remarkable Conspiracies and Revolutions in the Middle Ages." His "History of the Thirty-Years War," is considered a *chef d'œuvre*. His play of "Don Carlos" is an admirable production, but, perhaps, of all his dramas, "Wallenstein" is the most elaborate and splendid.

He died in 1805, with the calm heroism of a christian philosopher. But the works he has left behind him will for ever leave a spell of magic power in his very name. His countrymen idolise his memory, and foreign nations, though seeing him through the necessarily indistinct medium of a strange language, acquiesce in the justness of their homage. What endeared him most of all to his compatriots, was the lofty character of his enthusiasm, which believed all things and hoped all things, and the chivalrous philanthropy which saw something good in all mankind. He framed for himself an ideal standard of excellence, and believed in the possibility of its attainment; he formed for his own use a mystical but symmetrical religious creed, and embraced it with all the fiery earnestness of his character. Those who differed from his opinions could not, at all events, help admiring the lofty energy and straightforwardness of him who held them. The deep spirit of poetry which pervaded his writing pervaded his life also, and this, combined with the genuine sincerity and simplicity of character, obtained as much respect and veneration for the man, as his works secured admiration for the author. Few possessed a larger amount of these kindred feelings than Maurice Retsch, and none has given expression to them in forms so lasting. The simple-minded, tender-hearted, and enthusiastic artist could well and truly sympathise with the high-souled and ardent poet; and the same faithful pencil which assures his wife, in old age, of the lasting affection of the husband of her youth, may well link the graceful creations of a rich and glowing fancy to the immortal breathings of one of the finest geniuses of his German fatherland.



PEGASUS HARNESSSED TO THE COACH.



PEGASUS BEING STARVED INTO SUBJECTION



PEGASUS YOKED WITH AN OX.



PEGASUS FLYING AWAY TO HEAVEN.